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Mastering Bolshevism

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MASTERING BOLSHEVISM

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Mastering Bolshevism

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Mastering Bolshevism

Report by Joseph Stalin, General Secretary, to the Plenum (Plenary Session) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, March 3, 1937.

COMRADES, it can be seen from the reports and the discussion on them at the Plenum that we are dealing here with the following three basic facts:

First, the wrecking and diversive spying work of the agents of foreign countries, among whom the Trotskyites played an active enough role, affected to some degree or other all or almost all our organizations, both economic, administrative and Party.

Second, the agents of foreign countries among the Trotskyites penetrated not only into the lower organizations but also into some responsible positions.

Third, some of our leading comrades, both in the center and in the localities, were not only unable to recognize the real faces of these wreckers, diversionists, spies and murderers, but they were so careless, complacent and naive that not infrequently they themselves assisted the agents of foreign powers to get into various responsible positions.

These are three indisputable facts which naturally arise from the reports and the discussion on them.

1: Political Carelessness

HOW can it be explained that our leading comrades, who have a rich experience of struggle against every kind of anti-Party and anti-Soviet trend, proved to be so blind and naive in this case that they were unable to recognize the real face of the enemies of the people, were unable to discern the wolves in sheep's clothing, were unable to tear the mask from them?

Can it be stated that the wrecking and diversional—spying—work of the agents of foreign powers who were busy on the territory of the U.S.S.R. could be something unexpected and unprecedented for us? No, this cannot be stated. This is shown by the wrecking acts in various branches of national economy during the past ten years, starting with the Shakhty period, which are set out in official documents.

Can it be stated that we have lately had no warning signals and forewarning directives about the wrecking, spying or terroristic activity of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite agents of fascism? No, this cannot be stated. There were such signals, and Bolsheviks have no right to forget them.

The foul murder of Comrade Kirov was the first serious warning showing that the enemies of the people will practice duplicity and, in doing so, will disguise themselves as Bolsheviks, as Party members, so as to worm

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their way into our confidence and open a path for themselves into our organizations.

The trial of the "Leningrad Center", like the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial, provided new foundations for the lessons arising from the fact of the foul murder of Comrade Kirov.

The trial of the "Zinoviev-Trotskyite bloc" extended the lessons of the previous trials, plainly showing that the Zinovievites and Trotskyites unite around themselves all the hostile bourgeois elements, that they had become the spying and diversionist—terroristic—agency of the German secret police, that double-dealing and concealment are the only means by which the Zinovievites and Trotskyites can penetrate into our organizations, that vigilance and political keenness are the truest means of preventing such penetration, for the liquidation of the Zinovievite-Trotskyite gang.

The Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. in its closed letter of January 18, 1935, regarding the foul murder of Comrade Kirov, gave a resolute warning to the Party organizations against political complacency and parochial gaping. It says in the closed letter:

"We must put an end to opportunist complacency arising from the mistaken presupposition that in proportion to the growth of our forces the enemy will grow ever tamer and more inoffensive. Such a presupposition is basically wrong. It is a belch of the Right deviation, which assured everyone that the enemies would quietly creep into socialism, that in the long run they would become real socialists. It

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is not the business of the Bolsheviks to rest on their laurels and stand around gaping. It is not complacency that we need but vigilance, real Bolshevik revolutionary vigilance. It must be remembered that the more desperate the position of the enemies, the more willing they will be to seize on extreme measures as the only measures of doomed people in their struggle against Soviet power. We must remember this and be vigilant."

In the closed letter of July 29, 1936, regarding the spying and terroristic activity of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite bloc, the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. called on the Party organization to show the maximum vigilance, to be able to recognize the enemies of the people no matter how well masked. It says in the closed letter:

"Now when it has been proved that the Trotskyite-Zinovievite scum unite all the most bitter and sworn enemies of the working people of our country—spies, agents provocateurs, diversionists, White Guards, kulaks, etc.—in the struggle against Soviet power, when every distinguishing mark has been obliterated between these elements on the one hand and the Trotskyites and Zinovievites on the other, all our Party organizations, all members of the Party must understand that the vigilance of Communists is necessary in every field and in all situations. An indispensable quality of every Bolshevik in the present conditions must be the ability to recognize the enemy of the Party no matter how well he be masked."

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So signals and warnings were given.

What did these signals and warnings call for?

They called for the liquidation of the weakness of Party organizational work and the conversion of the Party into an impregnable fortress into which not a single double-dealer could penetrate.

They called for putting a stop to the underestimation of Party political work and making a resolute turn in the direction of strengthening such work to the utmost, in the direction of strengthening political vigilance.

And what happened? The facts have shown that our comrades took in these signals and warnings with more than stiffness.

This is eloquently shown by all the facts which we know from the sphere of the campaign for verifying and exchanging Party documents.

How can it be explained that these warnings and signals did not produce the proper action? How can it be explained that our Party comrades in spite of their experience of struggle against anti-Soviet elements, in spite of a whole series of warning signals and forewarning directives, proved to be politically shortsighted in the face of the wrecking and spying diversive work of the enemies of the people?

Is it that our Party comrades have become worse than they were before, have become less conscientious and disciplined? No, of course not.

Is it that they have begun to degenerate? Again, no. Such a supposition is completely unfounded.

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Then, what is the matter? Whence arises such gaping, carelessness, complacency, blindness?

The fact is that our Party comrades, carried away by economic campaigns and by enormous successes on the front of economic construction, simply forgot some very important facts which Bolsheviks have no right to forget. They forgot one fundamental fact from the sphere of the international position of the U.S.S.R. and did not notice two very important facts which apply directly to the present wreckers, spies, diversionists and murderers sheltering behind the Party card and disguised as Bolsheviks.

2: Capitalist Encirclement

WHAT are these facts which our Party comrades forgot, or which they simply did not notice?

They forgot that Soviet power has conquered only one-sixth of the world, that five-sixths of the world is in the possession of capitalist powers. They forgot that the Soviet Union is in the conditions of capitalist encirclement. It is an accepted thing to talk loosely about capitalist encirclement, but people do not want to ponder upon what sort of a thing this capitalist encirclement is.

Capitalist encirclement—that is no empty phrase; that is a very real and unpleasant feature. Capitalist encirclement means that here is one country, the Soviet Union, which has established the socialist order on its own territory and besides this there are many countries, bourgeois countries, which continue to carry on a capitalist mode of life and which surround the Soviet Union, waiting for an opportunity to attack it, break it, or at any rate to undermine its power and weaken it.

Our comrades forgot this fundamental fact. But it is that precisely which determines the basis of relations between the capitalist encirclement and the Soviet Union.

Take for example the bourgeois states. Simple-minded people may think that extremely good relations reign between them, as between states of the same type. But only simple-minded people can think so. In reality the

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relations between them are far from being those of good neighbors. It has been proved as plainly as two and two make four that the bourgeois states shower their spies, wreckers, diversionists and sometimes murderers on each other, behind their frontiers; give them instructions to worm themselves into the factories and institutions of these states, to create their own network there and "in case of necessity" to smash them from the rear so as to weaken them and undermine their power. Such is the case at the present time.

Such, too, has been the case in the past. Take for example the countries of Europe at the time of Napoleon the First. France at that time was swarming with spies and diversionists from the camp of the Russians, Germans, Austrians and English. And, at the same time, England, the German states, Austria, and Russia had behind their lines no fewer spies and diversionists from the French camp. Agents of Great Britain twice made attempts on the life of Napoleon, and several times roused the peasants of the Vendee in France against the government of Napoleon. And what was Napoleon's government? A bourgeois government which had strangled the French Revolution and retained only those results of the revolution which were profitable to the big bourgeoisie. Needless to say, Napoleon's government did not remain indebted to its neighbors. It also undertook its own diversional measures. Such was the case in the past, 130 years ago. Such is the case now, 130 years after Napoleon the First. France and England at the present day are swarming with German spies and diver-

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sionists and, on the other hand, Anglo-French spies and diversionists in turn are at work in Germany. America is swarming with Japanese spies and diversionists, and Japan with American.

Such is the law of relations between bourgeois states.

The question must be put: why should the bourgeois countries be gentler and more neighborly to the Soviet socialist government than they are to bourgeois states of their own type? Why should they send fewer spies, wreckers, diversionists and murderers behind the frontiers of the Soviet Union than they send behind the frontiers of bourgeois countries which are akin to them? Where did you get this from? Will it not be truer, from the point of view of Marxism, to suppose that the bourgeois states must be sending twice or three times as many wreckers, spies, diversionists and murderers behind the lines of the Soviet Union than behind those of any bourgeois state?

Is it not clear that as long as capitalist encirclement exists there will be wreckers, spies, diversionists and murderers in our country, sent behind our lines by the agents of foreign states?

Our Party comrades forgot about all this, and having forgotten were caught unawares.

This is why the spying and diversive work of the Trotskyite agents of the Japanese and German secret police was completely unexpected by some of our comrades.

3: Present-Day Trotskyism

TO PROCEED. In carrying on a struggle against the Trotskyite agents, our Party comrades did not notice, they overlooked the fact, that present-day Trotskyism is no longer what it was, let us say, seven or eight years ago; that Trotskyism and the Trotskyites have passed through a serious evolution in this period which has utterly changed the face of Trotskyism; that in view of this the struggle against Trotskyism and the method of struggle against it must also be utterly changed. Our Party comrades did not notice that Trotskyism has ceased to be a political trend in the working class, that it has changed from the political trend in the working class which it was seven or eight years ago, into a frantic and unprincipled gang of wreckers, diversionists, spies and murderers acting on the instructions of the intelligence services of foreign states.

What is a political trend in the working class? A political trend in the working class is a group or a party which has its own definite political face, platform and program, which does not and cannot hide its views from the working class but, on the contrary, openly and honestly carries on propaganda for its views in full view of the working class, does not fear to show its political face to the working class, does not fear to demonstrate its real aims and tasks to the working class but, on the contrary, goes to

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the working class with open visor to convince it of the correctness of its views. In the past, seven or eight years ago, Trotskyism was one of such political trends in the working class, an anti-Leninist trend, it is true, and therefore profoundly mistaken, but nevertheless a political trend.

Can it be said that present-day Trotskyism, the 1936 Trotskyism, let us say, is a political trend in the working class? No, this cannot be said. Why? Because the present-day Trotskyites are afraid to show their real face to the working class, are afraid to disclose their real aims and tasks to it, and carefully hide their political face from the working class, fearing that if the working class should learn of their real intentions it will curse them as an alien people and drive them from it. This in reality explains how it is that the chief method of Trotskyite work is now not open and honest propaganda of its views among the working class, but the masking of its views, servile and fawning praise for the views of its opponents, a false and pharisaical trampling of its own views in the dirt.

If you remember, Kamenev and Zinoviev at the trial in 1936 strenuously denied that they had any political platform. It was fully possible for them to develop their political platform at the trial. But they did not do so, declaring that they had no political platform. There can be no doubt that both of them were lying when they denied that they had a platform. Even the blind can now see that they had their political platform. But why did they deny the existence of any political platform?

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Because they were afraid to disclose their real political face, they were afraid to demonstrate their real platform for the restoration of capitalism in the U.S.S.R., fearing that such a platform would arouse revulsion in the working class.

At the trial in 1937, Piatakov, Radek and Sokolnikov took a different line. They did not deny that the Trotskyites and Zinovievites had a political platform. They admitted that they had a definite political platform, recognized and unfolded it in their testimony. But they unfolded it not to call on the working class, not to call on the people to support the Trotskyite platform, but in order to curse it and brand it as an anti-people's and anti-proletarian platform.

The restoration of capitalism, the liquidation of the collective farms and state farms, the restoration of the system of exploitation, an alliance with the fascist forces of Germany and Japan to bring war against the Soviet Union nearer, a struggle for war and against the policy of peace, the territorial dismemberment of the Soviet Union, giving the Ukraine to the Germans and the maritime provinces to the Japanese, the preparation of the military defeat of the Soviet Union if enemy states should attack it, and, as a means of achieving these tasks, wrecking, diversion, individual terrorism against the leaders of the Soviet government, espionage for the benefit of the Japanese and German fascist forces—such was the political platform of present-day Trotskyism which was set forth by Piatakov, Radek and Sokolnikov.

Naturally the Trotskyites could not but hide such a

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platform from the people, from the working class. And they hid it not only from the working class but also from the Trotskyite rank and file, and not only from the Trotskyite rank and file but even from the leading group of the Trotskyites, consisting of a small handful of 30 or 40 people. When Radek and Piatakov asked Trotsky's permission to call a small conference, 30 or 40 people, to inform them of the character of this platform, Trotsky forbade them, saying it was inexpedient to talk of the real nature of the platform even to a small group of Trotskyites as such an "operation" might cause a split.

"Political figures" hiding their views and their platform not only from the working class but also from the Trotskyite rank and file, and not only from the Trotskyite rank and file, but from the leading group of Trotskyites—such is the face of present-day Trotskyism.

But it follows from this that present-day Trotskyism can no longer be called a political trend in the working class. Present-day Trotskyism is not a political trend in the working class but a gang without principle, without ideas, of wreckers, diversionists, intelligence service agents, spies, murderers, a gang of sworn enemies of the working class, working in the pay of the intelligence services of foreign states.

Such is the indisputable result of the evolution of Trotskyism in the past seven or eight years.

Such is the difference between Trotskyism in the past and Trotskyism at the present time.

The mistake of our Party comrades is that they did not notice this profound difference between Trotskyism

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in the past and Trotskyism at the present time. They did not notice that the Trotskyites have long since ceased to be people devoted to an idea, that the Trotskyites have long since turned into highway robbers, capable of any foulness, capable of all that is disgusting, to the point of espionage and the outright betrayal of their country, if only they can harm the Soviet government and Soviet power. They did not notice this and were therefore unable to reconstruct themselves in time to wage battle against the Trotskyites in a new and more regular manner. This is why the abominable work of the Trotskyites of late years was a complete surprise for some of our Party comrades.

To proceed. Finally, our Party comrades did not notice that there is an important difference between the present-day wreckers and diversionists, on the one hand, among whom the Trotskyite agents of fascism play "an active part", and the wreckers and diversionists of the time of the Shakhty trial, on the other hand.

In the first place, the Shakhty and Industrial Party wreckers were people openly alien to us. They were in greater part former owners of factories, former managers for the old employers, former shareholders of old joint-stock companies, or simple bourgeois specialists who were openly hostile to us politically. None of our people had any doubt about the authenticity of the political face of these gentlemen. And the Shakhty wreckers themselves did not conceal their distaste for the Soviet system.

The same cannot be said of the present-day wreckers and diversionists, the Trotskyites. The present-day wreck-

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ers and diversionists, the Trotskyites, are mostly Party people with a Party card in their pocket, and consequently people who formally are not alien to us.

Whereas the old wreckers went against our people, the new wreckers on the contrary cringe to our people, laud them, lick their boots, in order to worm their way into their confidence. As you see, the difference is essential.

In the second place, the strength of the Shakhty and Industrial Party wreckers was that to a greater or lesser degree they possessed the necessary technical knowledge, while our people, not possessing such knowledge, were forced to learn from them. This circumstance gave a great advantage to the wreckers of the Shakhty period, made it possible for them to do their wrecking work freely and unhindered, made it possible for them to deceive our people *technically*.

This is not so with the present-day wreckers, with the Trotskyites. The present-day wreckers have no technical superiority over our people. On the contrary, our people are better trained technically than the present-day wreckers, than the Trotskyites. During the time from the Shakhty period to our own days, tens of thousands of genuine, technically strong Bolshevik cadres have grown up among us. One could mention thousands and tens of thousands of Bolshevik leading figures technically developed in comparison with whom all such people as Piatakov and Livshitz, Shestov and Boguslavsky, Muralov and Drobnis are empty windbags and mere tyros from the point of view of technical training. In this case, what does the strength of the present-day wreckers, the Trot-

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skyites, consist of? Their strength lies in the Party card, in the possession of a Party card. This strength lies in the fact that the Party card gives them political trust and opens the doors of all our institutions and organizations to them.

Their advantage lies in the fact that holding a Party card and pretending to be friends of the Soviet power they tricked our people *politically*, misused their confidence, did their wrecking work furtively, and disclosed our secrets of state to the enemies of the Soviet Union. This "advantage" is a doubtful one in its political and moral values, but still it is an "advantage". This "advantage", in reality, explains the fact that the Trotskyite wreckers, as people with a Party card having access to all places in our institutions and organizations, were a real windfall for the intelligence services of foreign states.

The mistake of some of our Party comrades is that they did not notice, did not understand all this difference between the old and the new wreckers, between the Shakhty wreckers and the Trotskyites, and not noticing this, they were unable to reconstruct themselves in time so as to wage battle against the new wreckers in a new way.

4: The Seamy Side of Economic Success

SUCH are the basic facts from the sphere of our international and internal situation, about which many of our Party comrades forgot, or which they did not notice.

This is why our people were taken by surprise by the events of the last few years as regards wrecking and diversion.

It may be asked: But why did our people not notice all this, why did they forget about all this? Where did all this forgetfulness, blindness, carelessness and complacency come from?

Is it an organic defect in the work of our people? No, it is not an organic defect. It is a temporary phenomenon which can be rapidly liquidated by some efforts on the part of our people.

Then what is the matter?

The matter is that our Party comrades have been totally absorbed in economic work in recent years, have been engrossed to the limit in economic successes, and being engrossed in all these things forgot about all else, threw aside all else.

The matter is that being carried away by economic successes they began to regard this as the beginning and end of everything, and simply gave up paying attention to such things as the international position of the Soviet Union, capitalist encirclement, strengthening of the

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political work of the Party, struggle against wrecking, etc., supposing all these questions to be second-rate and even third-rate matters.

Successes and achievements are, of course, a great thing. Our successes in the sphere of socialist construction are truly enormous.

But successes, like everything else under the sun, have their seamy side. Among people who are not very skillful in politics big successes and big achievements not infrequently give rise to carelessness, complacency, self-satisfaction, overweening self-confidence, swell-headedness and bragging. You cannot deny that braggarts have lately developed among us tremendously. It is not surprising in these circumstances of big and serious successes in the sphere of socialist construction that feelings of boastfulness are created, feelings of showy demonstration of our successes, and feelings are created for underestimating the strength of our enemies, feelings of overestimation of our own strength, and as a result of all this political blindness appears.

I must here say a few words about the dangers connected with successes, about the dangers connected with achievements.

We know by experience of the dangers connected with difficulties. For a number of years we have been fighting against such kinds of dangers, and I must say not without success. Among people who are not staunch, dangers connected with difficulties not infrequently give rise to downcast feelings, distrust in their own forces, feelings of pessimism. And, on the contrary, when it is

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a matter of fighting against the dangers which arise from difficulties, people are tempered in this struggle and emerge from the struggle really granite Bolsheviks.

Such is the nature of the dangers connected with difficulties. Such are the results of overcoming difficulties.

But there is another kind of danger, the danger connected with successes, the danger connected with achievements. Yes, yes, comrades, dangers connected with successes, with achievements. These dangers consist in the fact that among people little skilled in politics and not having seen much, the condition of successes—success after success, achievement after achievement, the overfulfilment of plans after the overfulfilment of plans—gives rise to feelings of carelessness and self-satisfaction, creates an atmosphere of showy triumphs and mutual congratulations which kill the sense of proportion and dull political instinct, take the spring out of people and impel them to rest on their laurels.

It is not surprising that in this narcotic atmosphere of swell-headedness and self-satisfaction, this atmosphere of showy demonstrations and loud self-praise, people forget some essential facts which are of first-grade significance for the fate of our country; people begin to miss seeing such unpleasant facts as capitalist encirclement, the new forms of wrecking, the dangers connected with our successes, etc.

Capitalist encirclement? A mere bagatelle! What significance can some capitalist encirclement or other have if we fulfill and surpass our economic plans? The new forms of wrecking, the struggle against Trotskyism? Mere

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details! What significance can all these trifles have when we fulfill and surpass our economic plans? The Party statutes, the election of Party organs, the reporting of the Party leaders to the mass of the Party members—is there really any need for all this? Is it worth while worrying about all these trifles at all if our economy grows and the material situation of the workers and peasants becomes ever better and better? Mere details! We overfulfil the plans, our Party is not bad, the Central Committee of the Party is also not bad—what else do we need? They are funny people sitting there in Moscow in the Central Committee of the Party. They invent some kind of questions, talk about some wrecking or other, don't sleep themselves, and don't let other people sleep. . . .

This is an example plain to see of how easily and "simply" some of our inexperienced comrades are infected with political blindness as the result of a dizzying rapture in economic successes.

Such are the dangers connected with successes, with achievements.

Such are the reasons why our Party comrades are carried away by economic successes, have forgotten facts of an international and internal character which are of real importance for the Soviet Union, and have not noticed a whole series of dangers surrounding our country.

Such are the roots of our carelessness, forgetfulness, complacency, and political blindness.

Such are the roots of the shortcomings in our economic and Party work.

5: Our Tasks

HOW are we to liquidate the shortcomings in our work? What must be done in order to do this?

It is necessary to carry out the following measures:

1. First and foremost, the attention of our Party comrades who get bogged on "current questions" in one department or another must be turned towards the big political questions of both international and internal character.

2. The political work of our Party must be raised to the proper level, making the main task that of the political training and Bolshevik steeling of the Party, Soviet and economic cadres.

3. It should be explained to our Party comrades that the economic successes, the significance of which is undoubtedly very great and which we shall also strive for in the future, day after day, year after year, are nevertheless not the whole of our socialist construction.

It should be explained that the seamy sides connected with economic successes and expressed in self-satisfaction, in carelessness, in the deadening of political intuition, can be liquidated only if economic successes are combined with the successes of Party construction and the developed political work of our Party.

It should be explained that economic successes them-

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selves, their stability and duration, wholly and fully depend on the successes of Party organizational and Party political work, that without this condition economic successes may prove to be built on sand.

4. It should be remembered and never forgotten that as long as capitalist encirclement exists there will be wreckers, diversionists, spies, terrorists, sent behind the frontiers of the Soviet Union by the intelligence services of foreign states; this should be remembered and a struggle should be carried on against those comrades who underestimate the significance of the fact of capitalist encirclement, who underestimate the strength and significance of wrecking.

It should be explained to our Party comrades that no economic successes whatsoever, no matter how great they are, can annul the fact of capitalist encirclement and the results arising therefrom.

The necessary measures must be taken to give our comrades, both Party and non-Party Bolsheviks, the possibility of getting acquainted with the aims and tasks, with the practice and technique of the wrecking, diversionist and espionage work of the foreign intelligence services.

5. It should be explained to our Party comrades that the Trotskyites, who represent the active elements in the diversionist, wrecking and espionage work of the foreign intelligence services, have already long ceased to be a political trend in the working class, that they have already long ceased to serve any idea compatible with the interests of the working class, that they have turned into

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a gang of wreckers, diversionists, spies, assassins, without principles and ideas, working for the foreign intelligence services.

It should be explained that in the struggle against contemporary Trotskyism, not the old methods, the methods of discussion, must be used, but new methods, methods for smashing and uprooting it.

6. The difference between the present-day wreckers and the wreckers of the Shakhty period should be explained to our Party comrades. It should be explained to them that whereas the wreckers of the Shakhty period misled our people in the sphere of technique, utilizing their technical backwardness, the present-day wreckers with a Party card in their possession deceive our people by utilizing the political trust shown towards them as Party members, utilizing the political carelessness of our people.

To the old slogan of the mastery of technique which corresponded to the Shakhty period there must be added the new slogan calling for the political training of cadres, the mastery of Bolshevism and the liquidation of our political trustfulness, a slogan which fully corresponds to the present period we are now passing through.

The question may be asked: Was it not possible ten years ago, at the time of the Shakhty period, to advance both slogans simultaneously, *i.e.*, the first slogan regarding the mastery of technique and the second slogan regarding the political training of cadres? No, it was not possible. Things are not done that way in the Bolshevik Party. At the turning points of the revolutionary move-

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ment, some basic slogan is always advanced as the key slogan in order, by catching on to it, to draw in the whole chain. That is what Lenin taught us: find the main link in the chain of our work, lay hold of it, draw it in, in order through it to draw in the whole chain and go forward. The history of the revolutionary movement shows that this is the only correct tactic.

In the Shakhty period, the weakness of our people lay in their technical backwardness. Technical questions and not political ones were our weak spots at that time. As far as our political attitude towards the wreckers of that time was concerned, it was perfectly clear that it was the attitude of Bolsheviks towards politically alien people. We liquidated this technical weakness of ours by advancing the slogan regarding the mastery of technique and by educating tens and hundreds of thousands of technically steeled Bolshevik cadres during the past period.

It is a different question now when we have technically developed Bolshevik cadres and when the part of wreckers is played not by openly alien people in possession of technical superiority over our own people, but by people in possession of Party membership cards and enjoying all the rights of Party membership. The weakness from which our people suffer now is not technical backwardness, but political carelessness, blind faith in people who have come by chance into possession of Party membership cards, the failure to check up on people not according to the political declarations they make, but according to the results of the work they do. The key question now

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facing us is not the liquidation of the technical backwardness of our cadres, for in the main this has already been done, but the liquidation of the political carelessness and political trustfulness in wreckers who have by chance obtained possession of Party membership cards.

Such is the fundamental difference between the key question in respect to the struggle for cadres in the period of the Shakhty days and the key question of the present period.

That is why ten years ago we could and should not have issued both the slogans together, namely, the one regarding the mastery of technique and the one regarding the political training of cadres.

This is why the old slogan of the mastery of technique must now be supplemented by the new slogan of the mastery of Bolshevism, the political training of cadres and the liquidation of our political carelessness.

7. We must destroy and cast aside the rotten theory that with every advance we make the class struggle here of necessity would die down more and more, and that in proportion as we achieve successes the class enemy would become more and more tractable.

This is not only a rotten theory but a dangerous one, for it lulls our people, leads them into a trap, and makes it possible for the class enemy to rally for the struggle against the Soviet government.

On the contrary, the further forward we advance, the greater the successes we achieve, the greater will be the fury of the remnants of the broken exploiting classes,

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the sooner will they resort to sharper forms of struggle, the more will they seek to harm the Soviet state and the more will they clutch at the most desperate means of struggle, as the last resort of doomed people.

It should be borne in mind that the remnants of the broken classes in the U.S.S.R. are not alone. They have the direct support of our enemies beyond the bounds of the U.S.S.R. It would be a mistake to think that the sphere of the class struggle is limited to the bounds of the U.S.S.R. While one end of the class struggle has its operation within the bounds of the U.S.S.R., its other stretches to the bounds of the bourgeois states surrounding us. The remnants of the broken classes cannot but be aware of this. And precisely because they are, they will continue their desperate assaults in the future.

This is what history teaches us. This is what Leninism teaches us.

We must remember all this and be on our guard.

8. We must destroy and cast aside another rotten theory according to which the individual who is not always engaged in wrecking and who even occasionally shows successes in his work cannot be a wrecker.

This strange theory exposes the naivete of its authors. No wrecker will engage in wrecking all along the line if he wants to avoid being exposed in the shortest possible time. On the contrary, the real wrecker has from time to time to show successes in his work, for this is his only means of keeping himself going as a wrecker, of winning the confidence of people and of continuing his wrecking work.

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I think that this question is clear and requires no further explanation.

9. We must destroy and cast aside the third rotten theory, to the effect that the systematic fulfilment of economic plans reduces wrecking and its consequences to naught.

Such a theory can only have one purpose, namely, to titillate the self-esteem of our departmental officials, to lull them and to weaken their struggle against wrecking.

What is the meaning of "the systematic fulfilment of our economic plans"?

First, it has been proved that all our economic plans are below normal because they do not take account of the tremendous reserves and possibilities lying hidden in our national economy.

Second, the general fulfilment of the economic plans by the commissariats as a whole does not mean that the plans are also fulfilled by certain very important branches. On the contrary, the facts go to show that quite a number of commissariats, which fulfil or even more than fulfil the economic plans for the year, systematically fail to fulfil the plans in several very important branches of the national economy.

Third, there can be no doubt that had the wreckers not been exposed and thrown out, the position in respect to the fulfilment of economic plans would have been far worse. This is something which the shortsighted authors of the theory under review need to remember.

Fourth, the wreckers usually adapt the main part of their wrecking work not to the peace-time period, but

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to that of the eve of war or of war itself. Suppose we were to lull ourselves with the rotten theory of "the systematic fulfilment of the economic plans", and were not to touch the wreckers. Do the authors of this rotten theory appreciate what a tremendous amount of harm the wreckers would do to our country in case of war, if we were to allow them to remain inside the body of our national economy, sheltered by the rotten theory of "the systematic fulfilment of economic plans"?

Is it not clear that the theory of "the systematic fulfilment of economic plans" is a theory advantageous to the wreckers?

10. We must destroy and cast aside the fourth rotten theory to the effect that the Stakhanov movement is the chief means for liquidation of wrecking.

This theory has been invented so as to divert the blow from the wreckers with a noise of chatter about Stakhanov workers and the Stakhanov movement.

In his report, Comrade Molotov quoted a whole number of facts which go to show how the Trotskyites and non-Trotskyite wreckers in the Kuznets and Don Basins abused the confidence of our politically careless comrades, systematically led the Stakhanov workers a dance, placed spokes in their wheels, so to speak, artificially created a whole number of obstacles preventing their working successfully and finally succeeded in disorganizing their work.

What could the Stakhanov workers do alone if the way capital construction was carried on by the wreckers in the Don Basin, let us say, led to a gap between the slowly

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moving preparatory work of coal mining and all the other fields of the work?

Is it not clear that the Stakhanov movement itself is in need of our effective aid against all the various machinations of the wreckers so as to speed things on and to fulfil its great mission? Is it not clear that the struggle against wrecking, for its liquidation, and the gaining of the upper hand over wrecking is the necessary condition for the Stakhanov movement to blossom out to the full? I think that this question is also clear and in no need of further comment.

11. We must destroy and cast aside the fifth rotten theory to the effect that the Trotskyite wreckers possess no more reserve, that they are mustering their last reserves.

This is untrue, comrades. Only naive people could invent such a theory. The Trotskyite wreckers have their reserves. These consist first and foremost of the remnants of the smashed exploiting classes in the U.S.S.R. They consist of a whole number of groups and organizations beyond the bounds of the U.S.S.R. and hostile to the Soviet Union.

Take, for example, the Trotskyite counter-revolutionary Fourth International, two-thirds of which is made up of spies and subversive agents. Isn't this a reserve? Is it not clear that this international of spies will select forces to do the spying and wrecking work of the Trotskyites?

Or take, for example, the group of the rascal Sheffo in Norway, who provided a haven for the arch-spy Trotsky and helped him to do harm to the Soviet Union.

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Isn't this group a reserve? Who can deny that this counter-revolutionary group will continue in the future to render services to the Trotskyite spies and wreckers?

Or take, for example, the Souvarine group in France, a group of rascals like Sheflo. Isn't this a reserve? Can it be denied that this group of scoundrels will also help the Trotskyites in their espionage and wrecking work against the Soviet Union?

All these ladies and gentlemen from Germany, all the Ruth Fischers, Maslovs and Urbans who have sold themselves body and soul to the fascists—aren't they reserves for the espionage and wrecking work of the Trotskyites?

Or take, for example, the well-known gang of American writers headed by the notorious racketeer Eastman, all these gangsters of the pen who live by slandering the working class of the Soviet Union—aren't they reserves for Trotskyism?

No, the rotten theory that the Trotskyites are mustering their last forces must be cast aside.

12. Finally, we must destroy and cast aside still another rotten theory to the effect that since we Bolsheviks are many while the wreckers are few; since we Bolsheviks have the support of tens of millions of people while the Trotskyite wreckers can be numbered in tens and units, then we Bolsheviks can afford to pay no attention to such a handful of wreckers.

This is incorrect, comrades. This more than strange theory has been invented so as to bring solace to certain of our leading comrades who have failed in their work by reason of their inability to carry on a struggle against

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the wrecking, to lull their vigilance and to make it possible for them to sleep in peace.

It is, of course, true that the Trotskyite wreckers have the support of isolated individuals, while the Bolsheviks have the support of tens of millions of people. But it by no means follows from this that the wreckers are not able to inflict very serious damage on us. It does not at all need a big number of people to do harm and to cause damage. Tens of thousands of workers have to be set to work to build a Dnieprostroy, but it requires not more than a few dozen men to blow it up. Several Red Army corps may be necessary to win a battle during war time. But it only needs a few spies somewhere in the army headquarters or even in a divisional staff to steal the plan of operations and pass it on to the enemy for this gain to be lost. Thousands of people are required to build a big railway bridge, but a few people are sufficient to blow it up. Tens and hundreds of such examples could be quoted.

Consequently, we must not comfort ourselves with the fact that we are many, while they, the Trotskyite wreckers, are few.

We must bring about a situation where there is not a single Trotskyite wrecker left in our ranks.

This is how the matter stands with the question of how to liquidate the shortcomings in our work, common to all our organizations, economic and Soviet administrative and Party. Such are the measures necessary for the liquidation of these shortcomings.

As regards the Party organizations in particular and the defects in their work, the measures necessary to liqui-

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date these shortcomings are stated in sufficient detail in the draft resolution submitted for your consideration. I therefore think there is no need to enlarge here on this aspect of the question.

I would like to say just a few words on the question of political training and raising the level of our Party cadres.

I think that if we are able, if we succeed in giving ideological training to our Party cadres from top to bottom and steeling them politically so that they can find their bearings with ease in the internal and international situation, if we succeed in making of them fully mature Leninists and Marxists capable of solving the questions of the leadership of the country without making serious mistakes, then we can thereby solve nine-tenths of all our tasks.

How do things stand with regard to the leading forces of our Party?

In our Party, if we have in mind its leading strata, there are about 3,000 to 4,000 first rank leaders whom I would call our Party's corps of generals.

Then there are 30,000 to 40,000 middle rank leaders who are our Party corps of officers.

Then there are about 100,000 to 150,000 of the lower rank Party command staff who are, so to speak, our Party's non-commissioned officers.

The task is to raise the ideological level and political vigor of these command cadres and to introduce among them fresh forces awaiting promotion, and thus expand the ranks of our leading forces.

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What does this require?

First and foremost, we must make the proposal to our Party leaders beginning with secretaries of our Party units to the secretaries of regional and republican Party organizations to select, during a definite period, two individuals, two Party functionaries each capable of being able to act as their effective deputies.

The question may be asked: Where are we to get these two deputies for each one, if we have no such people, no workers who correspond to these requirements? This is incorrect, comrades. We have tens of thousands of capable and talented people. It only needs to know them and to promote them in time so that they should not remain in their old places too long and begin to rot. Seek and ye shall find.

Further, four-month *Party courses* must be established in each regional center to give secretaries of units Party training and to re-equip them. The secretaries of all primary Party organizations (units) should be sent to these courses and then when they finish them and return home their deputies and the most capable members of the primary Party organizations should be sent to these courses.

Further, to re-equip politically the first secretaries of the district organizations, eight-month *Lenin courses* must be established in the U.S.S.R., in, say, ten of the most important centers.

The first secretaries of district and regional Party organizations should be sent to these courses, and then when they finish them and return home their deputies

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and the most capable members of the district and regional organizations sent there.

Further, six-month *courses for the study of history and the Party's policy* under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union must be set up to achieve the ideological re-equipment and political improvement of secretaries of the town Party organizations. The first and second secretaries of town Party organizations should be sent to these courses and then when they have finished them and return home the most capable members of the town Party organizations should be sent there.

Finally, a six-month *conference on questions of internal and international policy* under the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. must be established.

The first secretaries of divisional and provincial organizations and the Central Committees of the national Communist Parties should be sent here. These comrades should provide not one but several persons really capable of replacing the leaders of the Central Committee of our Party. This should and must be done.

I conclude, comrades.

We have thus outlined the main defects in our work, including those which are common to all our organizations, economic, administrative and Party, and also those which are specifically peculiar to Party organizations only—defects made use of by the enemies of the working class for their diversionist and wrecking, espionage and terrorist work.

We have further outlined the chief measures to be

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taken to render harmless and liquidate the diversive, wrecking, espionage and terrorist assaults of the Trotskyite fascist agents of the foreign intelligence services.

The question arises: Can we carry through all these measures, do we possess all the necessary possibilities for this? Undoubtedly we can. We can, because we have at our disposal all the means necessary for the realization of these measures.

What do we lack? We lack only one thing: the readiness to liquidate our own carelessness, our own complacency, our own political shortsightedness.

There is the rub. Cannot we who have overthrown capitalism, in the main built socialism, and raised aloft the great banner of world communism, get rid of this ridiculous and idiotic disease?

We have no reason to doubt that we shall certainly get rid of it, given, of course, that we will it. We will get rid of it, not just in an ordinary manner but in a Bolshevik fashion, in real fashion.

And when we get rid of this idiotic disease, we can say with complete confidence that we fear no enemies from within or without, we fear none of their assaults, for we shall shatter them in the future, as we are doing now and as we have done in the past. (*Applause.*)

Concluding Speech

*Reply by Joseph Stalin to Discussion at
the Plenum of the Central Committee
of the Communist Party of the Soviet
Union, March 5, 1937.*

COMRADES, I spoke in my report about the basic questions of the matter under discussion. The discussion has shown that we now have complete clarity, have an understanding of our tasks, and that there is a readiness to liquidate the shortcomings of our work. But the discussion has also shown that there are some concrete questions of our organizational-political practice on which we have not as yet a completely clear understanding. Of these questions, I have counted seven.

Allow me to say a few words on these questions.

1. It is to be supposed that all have now understood and have realized that to become excessively engrossed in economic campaigns and economic successes while underestimating and forgetting Party political problems leads up a blind alley. Consequently it is necessary to turn the attention of our workers toward Party political questions, so that economic successes will be combined with and accompany successes in Party political work.

How in practice is the task of strengthening the Party political work, the task of freeing the Party organizations

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from economic details to be carried out? As can be seen from the discussion, some comrades are prone to draw the incorrect conclusions that we should now get away altogether from economic work. At any rate, there were voices sounding this note: "Well, now, thank God, we shall be rid of economic matters, now we can busy ourselves with Party political work."

Is this conclusion correct? No, it is not. When our Party comrades, carried away with economic successes, moved away from politics, this was an extreme which cost us big sacrifices. If some of our comrades, taking up the task of strengthening Party political work, now think of moving away from economy, this will be the other extreme, which will cost us no fewer sacrifices. You must not jump from one extreme to another. You must not separate politics from economy, just as we cannot move away from politics.

For convenience in study, people usually separate the methodological questions of economy from the questions of politics. But this is done merely from the standpoint of method, artificially, only for the convenience of study. But in life, on the contrary, politics and economy are in practice inseparable. They exist together. And he who thinks to separate economy from politics in our practical policy, to strengthen economic work at the cost of belittling political work or, contrariwise, to strengthen political work at the cost of belittling economic work, will inevitably find himself up a blind alley.

The particular point in the draft resolution on the freeing of Party organizations from economic details and

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the strengthening of Party political work does not mean moving away from economic work and economic leadership. It means, simply, no longer to permit the practice of supplanting and usurping economic organs, among them especially agricultural organs, by our Party organizations. Consequently, it is necessary to master the method of Bolshevik leadership of economic organs, which lies in systematically helping these organs, systematically strengthening them and guiding economy, not over the heads of these organs but through them. The economic organs, and in the first place the agricultural organs, must be given the best people.

These organs must receive fresh staffs, consisting of the best workers capable of carrying out the tasks assigned to them. Only after this work has been done will it be possible to count on the Party organizations being completely freed from economic details. This is a serious matter, of course, and requires a certain length of time. But until it is done, the Party organizations, for a definite short period, will still have to occupy themselves closely with agricultural affairs, with all their details: plowing, sowing, harvesting, etc.

2. A few words about wreckers, diversionists, spies, etc. It is now clear for all, I think, that the present-day wreckers and diversionists, no matter what flag they use to cover themselves, the Trotskyite or the Bukharin flag, have long since ceased to be a political trend in the working class movement, that they have turned into a gang of professional wreckers, diversionists, spies and murderers,

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devoid of principles and ideas. Of course, these gentlemen will have to be smashed and ruthlessly uprooted as enemies of the working class, as traitors to our country. This is clear and does not require further explanation.

But here is the question—how to carry out in practice the task of smashing and uprooting the German-Japanese agents of Trotskyism. Does this mean that we should strike and uproot not only the real Trotskyites, but also those who wavered at some time toward Trotskyism, and then long ago came away from Trotskyism; not only those who are really Trotskyite agents for wrecking, but also those who happened once upon a time to go along a street where some Trotskyite or other had once passed? At any rate, such voices were heard here at the plenum. Can we consider such an interpretation of the resolution to be correct? No, we cannot consider it to be correct.

On this question, as on all other questions, there must be an individual, differentiated approach. You must not measure everyone with the same yardstick. Such a sweeping approach can only harm the cause of struggle against the real Trotskyite wreckers and spies.

Among our responsible comrades there are a certain number of former Trotskyites who left Trotskyism long ago, and now fight against Trotskyism not worse but better than some of our respected comrades who never chanced to waver toward Trotskyism. It would be foolish to vilify such comrades now.

Among our comrades there are also those who always stood against Trotskyism ideologically, but in spite of this kept up personal contacts with individual Trotsky-

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ites, which they did not delay in liquidating as soon as the actual visage of Trotskyism became clear to them. It is, of course, not a good thing that they did not break off their personal friendly connections with individual Trotskyites at once, but belatedly. But it would be silly to lump such comrades together with the Trotskyites.

3. What does it mean—to select workers correctly, and to distribute them correctly at work?

This means to select workers, in the first place, according to a political criterion—that is, are they worthy of political trust? And, in the second place, according to a practical criterion—that is, are they suitable for such and such concrete work?

This does not mean to convert a business-like approach into a “business man’s” approach in which people are interested in the practical qualities of workers, but are not interested in their political physiognomy.

This does not mean to convert a political approach into the single and all-embracing approach in which people are interested in the political physiognomy of workers, but are not interested in their practical qualifications.

Can it be said that this Bolshevik rule is carried out by our Party comrades? Unfortunately, it cannot be said. It has already been spoken of here at the plenum. But not everything was said. The fact is that this well-trying rule is violated right and left in our practice and, moreover, in the grossest way. Most frequently, workers are selected not according to objective criteria, but accord-

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ing to accidental, subjective, narrow and provincial criteria. Most frequently so-called acquaintances are chosen, personal friends, fellow townsmen, people who have shown personal devotion, masters of eulogies to their patrons, irrespective of whether they are suitable from a political and a business-like standpoint.

Naturally, instead of a leading group of responsible workers, a family group, a company, is formed, the members of which try to live peacefully, not to offend each other, not to wash their dirty linen in public, to eulogize each other and from time to time to send inane and nauseating reports to the center about successes.

It is not difficult to understand that in such conditions of kinship there can be no place either for criticism of the shortcomings of the work, or for self-criticism by the leaders of the work.

Naturally, such conditions of kinship create a favorable environment for generating bootlickers, people without any sense of dignity, and therefore having nothing in common with Bolshevism.

Take, for example, Comrades Mirzoyan and Vainov. The former is secretary of the regional Party organization in Kazakstan; the latter is secretary of the Yaroslav regional Party organization. These people are not the most backward workers in our midst. And how do they select workers?

The former dragged along with him from Azerbaijan and the Urals, where he formerly worked, into Kazakstan thirty or forty of his "own" people, and placed them in responsible positions in Kazakstan.

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The latter dragged along with him from the Donbas, where he formerly worked, to Yaroslav a dozen or so of his "own" people also, and also placed them in responsible positions. Consequently, Comrade Mirzoyan has his own crew. Comrade Vainov also has his.

Was it really impossible to select workers from the local people, being guided by the well-known Bolshevik rule on the selection and placing of people? Of course, it was possible. Why then did they not do so? Because the Bolshevik rule for the selection of workers excludes the possibility of a narrow parochial approach, excludes the possibility of workers being selected according to criteria of kinship and being "one of the gang". In addition, when selecting personally devoted people as workers, these comrades evidently have wanted to create for themselves conditions which give them a certain independence both of the local people and of the Central Committee of the Party.

Let us suppose that Comrades Mirzoyan and Vainov, owing to some circumstances or other, are transferred from their present place of work to some other place. How should they act in such a case regarding their "tails"? Will they really have to drag them along once more to their new place of work?

This is the absurdity resulting from the violation of the Bolshevik rule on the correct selection and distribution of workers.

4. What does it mean—to verify workers, to check up on the fulfilment of tasks?

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To verify workers means to check up not on their promises and declarations, but on the result of their work.

To verify the fulfilment of tasks means to check up on them, not only in the office and not only according to formal reports, but first and foremost to check up on them at their place of work, according to the actual results of fulfilment.

Do we need such a verification in general? Undoubtedly we do. We need it, in the first place, because only such a check-up will make it possible to know a worker, to determine his real qualities. We need it, in the second place, because only such a verification will make it possible to determine the good qualities and shortcomings of the executive apparatus. We need it, in the third place, because only such a check-up will make it possible to determine the good qualities and shortcomings of the tasks themselves.

Some comrades think that people can only be checked up on from above, when the leaders check up on subordinates, on the results of their work. This is not true. Check-up from above is necessary, of course, as one of the effective measures for verifying people and checking up the fulfilment of tasks. But verification from above does not exhaust by far the whole business of verification. There is still another kind of verification, the check-up from below, in which the masses, the subordinates, verify the leaders, point out their mistakes, and show the way of correcting them. This kind of verification is one of the most effective methods of checking up on people.

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The rank-and-file members verify their leaders at meetings of active Party workers, at conferences and congresses, by listening to their reports, by criticizing defects, and finally by electing or not electing some or other leading comrades to the leading Party organs. Precise operation of democratic centralism in the Party as demanded by our Party statutes, unconditional electiveness of Party organs, the right to put forward and to withdraw candidates, the secret ballot and freedom of criticism and self-criticism—all these and similar measures must be carried into life, in order to facilitate the check-up on, and control over, the leaders of the Party by the rank-and-file Party members.

The non-Party masses check their economic, trade union and other leaders at meetings of non-Party active workers, at all kinds of mass conferences, where they hear reports of their leaders, criticize defects and indicate ways of correcting them. Finally, the people check leaders of the country during the elections to the Soviet Union organs of power, through universal, equal, direct and secret ballot.

The task is to link up the check from above with that from below.

5. What does it mean to train cadres on the basis of their own mistakes?

Lenin taught that one of the surest means of correctly training and educating Party cadres, of correctly training and educating the working class and the masses of the working people, is to disclose conscientiously the mistakes

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of the Party, to study the causes that have given rise to these mistakes, and to indicate the paths necessary for overcoming these mistakes.

Lenin said:

“The attitude of a political party toward its own mistakes is one of the most important and surest criteria of the seriousness of the party, and of how it fulfils, *in practice*, its obligations toward its class and toward the masses of working people. To admit a mistake openly, to disclose its reasons, to analyze the conditions which gave rise to it, to study attentively the means of correcting it—these are the signs of a serious party; this means the performance of its duties, this means educating and training the class and, subsequently, the masses.”

This means that the Bolsheviks are in duty bound not to gloss over their mistakes, not to dodge the question of their mistakes, as often happens with us, but honestly and openly to admit their mistakes, honestly and openly to indicate the way of correcting these mistakes, honestly and openly to correct them.

I would not say that many of our comrades undertake this business with satisfaction. But, if the Bolsheviks really wish to be Bolsheviks they must find sufficient manliness in themselves openly to admit their mistakes, to reveal their causes, to indicate the way of correcting them, and thereby to give the Party cadres correct training and correct political education.

For it is only on this path, only by open and honest

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self-criticism, that Bolshevik cadres really can be educated, that real Bolshevik leaders can be educated.

Two examples will illustrate the correctness of Lenin's thesis.

Let us take, as one example, our mistakes connected with the building up of the collective farms. You remember, I imagine, the year 1930, when our Party comrades thought of solving the very complicated question of transferring the peasantry to the building of collective farms in some three to four months, and when the Central Committee of the Party found itself compelled to put a check upon comrades who were being carried away. This was one of the most dangerous periods in the life of our Party. The mistake lay in this: that our Party comrades forgot the voluntary character of the building of collective farms, forgot that the peasants must not be transferred to the collective farm path by administrative pressure, forgot that the building of collective farms required not several months, but several years of careful and well-planned work.

They forgot all this, and did not want to admit their mistakes. You remember, I imagine, that the directions of the Central Committee regarding dizziness from success, and that our comrades in the localities should not leap ahead, ignoring the actual state of affairs, were met with hostility. But this did not prevent the Central Committee from going against the stream, and turning our Party comrades onto the right road. Well, then?

It is now clear to everybody that the Party achieved what it wanted by turning our Party comrades onto the

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right road. We now have tens of thousands of splendid peasant cadres engaged in the building of collective farms, and in their leadership these cadres grew up and were trained on the basis of the mistakes of 1930. But we would not now have had these cadres had not the Party then recognized these mistakes and corrected them in time.

The other example is from the field of industrial construction. I have in mind our mistakes in the Shakhty wrecking period. Our mistakes lay in the fact that we did not take into account all the dangers of the technical backwardness of our cadres in industry, that we put up with this backwardness, and thought of developing socialist industrial construction on a wide scale with the inimically-inclined specialists, dooming our economic cadres to play the part of poor commissars for the bourgeois specialists.

You remember, I imagine, how unwilling our economic cadres were to recognize their mistakes at that time; how unwilling they were to recognize their own technical backwardness, and with what difficulty they assimilated the slogan "Master Technique". Well, then, the facts go to show that the slogan "Master Technique", had its effects, and produced its good results. We now have tens and hundreds of thousands of splendid Bolshevik economic cadres, who have already mastered technique and are advancing our industry. But we would not now have these cadres had the Party not risen to the occasion, in the face of the obduracy of the business executives who did not want to admit their technical backwardness, had

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not the Party then recognized its mistakes and corrected them in time.

Some comrades say that it is not advisable to speak openly of one's mistakes, since the open admission of one's mistakes may be construed by our enemies as weakness and may be utilized by them.

This is rubbish, comrades, downright rubbish. The open recognition of our mistakes and their honest rectification can, on the contrary, only strengthen our Party, raise its authority in the eyes of the workers, peasants, and working intellectuals, and increase the strength and power of our state. And this is the main thing. As long as we have the workers, peasants and working intellectuals with us, all the rest will settle itself.

Other comrades say that the open admission of our mistakes can lead, not to training and consolidating our cadres, but to weakening and disconcerting them; that we must spare and take care of our cadres; that we must spare their self-esteem and tranquility. To this end they proposed to slur over the mistakes of our comrades, to weaken the vigor and the criticism and, still better, to disregard these mistakes. Such a line is not only fundamentally incorrect, but also dangerous in the highest degree—dangerous, first and foremost, for the cadres whom they want to “spare” and “take care of”.

To spare and preserve cadres by slurring over their mistakes means certainly to ruin these very cadres. We would surely have ruined our collective farm Bolshevik cadres had we not revealed the mistakes of the year 1930, and had we not trained them on the basis of these mis-

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takes. We would certainly have ruined our industrial Bolshevik cadres had we not revealed the mistakes of our comrades in the Shakhty wrecking period, and had we not trained our industrial cadres on the basis of these mistakes. He who expects to spare the self-esteem of our cadres by slurring over their mistakes ruins both the cadres and their self-esteem, for by slurring over their mistakes he facilitates the repetition of new and perhaps more serious mistakes which, one may presume, will lead to the complete downfall of the cadres, to the detriment of their "self-esteem" and "tranquility".

6. Lenin taught us not only to teach the masses, but also to learn from them.

What does this mean?

It means, first, that we leaders must not become conceited; and we must understand that if we are members of the Central Committee or are People's Commissars, this does not mean that we possess all the knowledge necessary for giving correct leadership. An official position by itself does not provide knowledge and experience. This is still more the case in respect to a title.

This means, second, that our experience alone, the experience of leaders, is insufficient to give correct leadership; that, consequently, it is necessary that one's experience, the experience of leaders, be supplemented by the experience of the masses, by the experience of the rank-and-file Party members, by the experience of the working class, by the experience of the people.

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This means, third, that we must not for one moment weaken, and still less break, our connection with the masses.

This means, fourth, that we must pay careful attention to the voice of the masses, to the voice of the rank-and-file members of the Party, to the voice of the so-called "small men", to the voice of the people.

What does it mean—to lead correctly?

This does not at all mean sitting in one's office and compiling instructions.

To lead correctly means:

First, to find a correct solution of the question. But a correct solution cannot be found unless account is taken of the experience of the masses, who test the results of our leadership on their own backs.

Second, to organize the operation of the correct solution which, however, cannot be done without direct aid from the masses.

Third, to organize a check on the fulfilment of this decision—which, again, cannot be done without the direct aid of the masses.

We leaders see things, events and people from one side only; I would say, from above. Our field of vision, consequently, is more or less limited.

The masses, on the contrary, see things, events and people from another side; I would say, from below. Their field of vision, consequently, is also in a certain degree limited. To receive a correct solution to the question these two experiences must be united. Only in such a case will the leadership be correct.

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This is what it means not only to teach the masses, but also to learn from them.

Two examples to illustrate the correctness of this thesis of Lenin:

It happened several years ago. We members of the Central Committee had discussed the question of improving the situation in the Don Basin. The draft of measures presented by the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry was clearly unsatisfactory. The draft was returned to the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry three times. Three times we received different drafts from the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry. And still they could not be considered satisfactory. Finally we decided to call in several workers and rank-and-file economic and trade union officials from the Don Basin.

For three days we conversed with these comrades. And all of us, members of the Central Committee, had to recognize that only they, the rank-and-file workers, these "small people", had succeeded in providing us with a correct solution. You remember, I imagine, the well-known decision of the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars regarding the measures for increasing the output of coal in the Don Basin. Well, this decision of the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars, which was admitted by all our comrades to be a correct and even notable decision, was suggested to us by simple people from below.

Another example I have in mind is the example of Comrade Nikolayenko.

Who is Nikolayenko? Nikolayenko is a rank-and-file

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member of the Party. She is an ordinary "little person". For a whole year she gave warning signals as to the bad situation in the Kiev Party organization, exposed the prevalence of family favoritism, the narrow and provincial approach to workers, the suppression of self-criticism and the predominance of Trotskyist wreckers. She was shunned as though she were an annoying fly. Finally, in order to rid themselves of her, they expelled her from the Party.

Neither the Kiev organization nor the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine helped her to achieve the truth. It was only the interference of the Central Committee of the Party that helped to unravel this confused knot. And what emerged after the examination of the affair? It emerged that Nikolayenko was right, while the Kiev organization was wrong. Neither more nor less. And who is this Nikolayenko? She was not, of course, a member of the Central Committee. She was not a People's Commissar, nor the secretary of the Kiev Regional organization. She was not even secretary of some Party cell. She was only a simple rank-and-file Party member.

As you see, simple people sometimes prove to be far nearer to the truth than some highly placed institutions.

One could give tens and hundreds of such examples.

Thus it turns out that our experience alone, the experience of the leaders, is still by far inadequate for the guidance of our affairs. In order to guide correctly, the experience of the leaders must be supplemented by the experience of the Party masses, by the experience of the

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working class, by the experience of the toilers, by the experience of the so-called "small people".

And when is this possible?

It is possible only if the leaders are closely connected with the masses, if they are bound up with the Party masses, with the working class, with the peasantry, with the working intellectuals.

Contacts with the masses, the strengthening of these contacts, readiness to listen to the voice of the masses—in this lie the strength and impregnability of Bolshevik leadership.

It may be taken as a rule that so long as Bolsheviks keep contacts with the broad masses of the people, they will be invincible. And, contrariwise, it is sufficient for Bolsheviks to break away from the masses and lose contact with them, to become covered with bureaucratic rash, for them to lose all their strength and become converted into nonentities.

In the system of mythology of the ancient Greeks there was one famous hero, Antaeus, who, as mythology declares, was the son of Poseidon, the God of the Sea, and Gaea, the Goddess of the Earth. He was particularly attached to his mother, who bore him, fed him and brought him up so that there was no hero whom this Antaeus did not vanquish. He was considered to be an invincible hero. Wherein lay his strength? It lay in the fact that every time he was hard-pushed in a struggle with an opponent, he touched the earth, his mother, who had borne him and fed him, and thus regained new strength.

But, nevertheless, he had a weak spot—the danger of

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being separated, in some way, from the earth. His enemies took account of this weakness of his, and waited for him. And an enemy was found who took advantage of this weakness and vanquished him. This was Hercules. But how did Hercules defeat him? He tore him from the earth, raised him into the air, deprived him of the possibility of touching the earth, and thus throttled him in the air.

I think that Bolsheviks remind us of Antaeus, the hero of Greek mythology. Like Antaeus, they are strong in keeping contact with their mother, with the masses, who bore them, fed them and educated them. And as long as they keep contact with their mother, with the people, they have every chance of remaining invincible.

This is the key to the invincibility of Bolshevik leadership.

7. Finally, still another question. I have in view the question of the formal and heartless bureaucratic attitude of some of our Party comrades toward the fate of individual Party members, toward the question of expelling members from the Party, or the question of restoring the rights of Party membership to those who have been expelled.

The fact is that some of our Party leaders suffer from lack of attention to people, to Party members, to workers. Furthermore, they do not study the Party members, do not know what is close to their hearts, and how they are growing, do not know workers in general. They have, therefore, not an individual approach to Party members,

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to Party workers. And just because they have not an individual approach when appraising Party members and Party workers, they usually act at random, either praising them wholesale, without measure, or crushing them, also wholesale, and without measure, expelling thousands and tens of thousands from the Party.

Such leaders try, in general, to think in tens of thousands, not to worry about "units", about individual Party members, about their fate. They think it a mere bagatelle to expel thousands and tens of thousands of people from the Party, comforting themselves by the fact that our Party is 2,000,000 strong, and that tens of thousands of people expelled cannot change anything in the position of the Party.

But, only people who in essence are profoundly anti-Party can have such an approach to members of the Party.

As the result of such a heartless attitude toward people, toward Party members and Party workers, discontent and bitterness are artificially created in a section of the Party, while the Trotskyite double-dealers adroitly seize hold of such embittered comrades and skillfully drag them after themselves into the morass of Trotskyite wrecking.

The Trotskyites, by themselves, were never a big force in our Party. Call to mind the last discussion on Trotskyism in our Party in 1927. This was a genuine Party referendum. Out of 854,000 Party members, 730,000 members voted at that time. Among them, 724,000 Party members voted for the Bolsheviks, for the Central Committee

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of the Party, against the Trotskyites, and 4,000 Party members, or about one-half of one per cent, voted for the Trotskyites, while 2,600 members of the Party refrained from voting.

There were 123,000 members who did not participate in the voting. They did not participate either because they were away from home, or because their shift was at work when the vote was taken. If, to the 4,000 who voted for the Trotskyites, we add all those who refrained from voting, on the assumption that they also sympathized with the Trotskyites, and if to this total we add, not one-half of one per cent of those who did not take part in the voting—as should be done by right—but five per cent of those who did not participate—that is, about 6,000 Party members—we obtain about 12,000 Party members who sympathized with Trotskyism to some extent or other. Here you see the total forces of the Trotskyite gentlemen.

Add to this the fact that many out of this number became disillusioned with Trotskyism and left it, and you get a conception of the insignificance of the Trotskyite forces. And if, in spite of this, the Trotskyite wreckers nevertheless have some reserves or other around our Party, it is because the incorrect policy of some of our comrades on the question of expulsion from the Party and reinstatement of expelled people, the heartless attitude of some of our comrades toward the fate of individual Party members and individual Party workers, artificially engender a number of discontented and embittered people, and thus create these reserves for the Trotskyites.

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A large number are expelled for so-called passivity. What is passivity? It is considered, we discover, that if a member of the Party has not *mastered* the Party program, he is "passive", and due for expulsion. But this is not right, comrades. The statutes of our Party cannot be interpreted so pedantically. To master the Party program one needs to be a real Marxist, a tested and theoretically trained Marxist. I do not know whether many Party members will be found by us in the Party who have already mastered our program, have become genuine Marxists, theoretically trained and tried. If we were to go further along this path, we should have to leave only intellectuals and learned people in general in the Party. Who wants such a Party? We have the Leninist formula about Party membership which is verified, has stood all tests. According to this formula, a Party member is one who *accepts* the Party program, pays membership dues and works in one of its organizations.

Note that Lenin's formula does not speak about *mastering* the program, but of *accepting* the program. These are two entirely different things. There is no need to prove Lenin was right here and not our Party comrades who vainly mouthed about mastering the program. It is obvious by itself. If the Party took the standpoint that Party members can be only those comrades who have already mastered the program and have become theoretically trained Marxists, it would not have formed thousands of Party circles in the Party, hundreds of Party schools where the Party members are taught Marxism and are helped to master our program. It is quite

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clear that if the Party organizes schools and circles among the Party members, it is because it knows that the Party members have not yet succeeded in mastering the Party program, have not yet succeeded in becoming theoretically trained Marxists.

Consequently, to correct our policy on the question of membership of the Party and expulsion from the Party, it is necessary to put an end to the present blockheaded interpretation of the question of passivity.

But we have still another error in this field. The fact is that our comrades do not recognize the mean between two extremes. It is sufficient for a worker, a Party member, to commit some small offense, to be late two or three times at a Party meeting, not to pay membership dues for some reason or other, and in a flash he is thrown out of the Party.

No interest is taken in the degree of his offense, the cause of his non-appearance at the meeting, the cause of the non-payment of membership dues. The bureaucracy of this is simply unparalleled. It is not difficult to understand that, precisely as the result of such a heartless policy, splendid skilled workers, excellent Stakhanovites, have been thrown out of the Party. And was it impossible, before expelling them from the Party, to give a warning, and if this had no effect, to censure them, or administer a reprimand, and, if this had no effect, to set a period for reformation, or in the extreme case to reduce to the position of a candidate, but not expel them with a sweep of the hand from the Party?

Of course it was possible.

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But this requires an attentive attitude to people, to the Party members, to the fact of Party membership. And this is exactly what some of our comrades lack.

It is high time to put a stop to this outrageous practice, comrades.

THE END

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